United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council welcomes urgent dispatch by Secretary-General of fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and calls for end to violence in that region.

+ Secretary-General reports that "it is not at present feasible" to dispatch peace-keeping operation to Bosnia-Herzegovina; says recent developments "have raised new doubts about the practicability" of United Nations operation in Croatia.

+ In address in Washington, Secretary-General proposes increased effort to "decentralize" responsibilities for peace-keeping and peace-making; calls on regional organizations "to carry larger share of burden".

+ United States President George Bush expresses full support for United Nations peace-keeping and peace-making activities; informs Secretary-General that he will attend Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro next month.

+ Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, Margaret Anstee, reports that voter registration for September elections in Angola will begin on 20 May.

+ Ellen Johnson Sirleaf appointed Assistant Administrator of United Nations Development Programme and Director of Regional Bureau for Africa.

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The Security Council has welcomed the urgent dispatch by the Secretary-General of a fact-finding mission to the Nagorno-Karabakh region to study ways of assisting the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict there.

In a statement read out last night by Council President, Peter Hohenfellner (Austria), the Council also called on all concerned "to take all steps necessary to bring the violence to an end" and to facilitate the work of

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the Secretary-General's mission. The mission will also examine how the international community can provide prompt humanitarian assistance to the region.

In the Presidential statement, the Council expressed deep concern at the violations of the cease-fire agreement and at reports on the deteriorating situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Council supported the efforts of the European Conference and other efforts aimed at promoting a peaceful settlement and at providing humanitarian assistance.

The convening of the Council was requested by the President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosia, who had asked for "an emergency meeting" to discuss the escalation of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. At a press conference this morning at Headquarters, the Armenian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Alexander Arzoumanian, said the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh had "worsened and required urgent attention of the international community to restore peace". He said he was encouraged by the quick response by the Security Council to send a fact-finding mission including a technical element for humanitarian assistance. He warned however that there would be "more bloodshed" if peace-keepers were not dispatched to the area.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has stated that "it is not at present feasible" to undertake peace-keeping activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina "beyond the existing limited involvement of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Sarajevo and in the Mostar region". In both places, he noted, the security of United Nations personnel was already "precarious". With regard to the situation in Croatia, the Secretary-General said "developments" since the Security Council authorized the United Nations peace-keeping operation in that region, "have raised new doubts about the practicability of that operation".

Those were the two main conclusions in the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council, dated 12 May, based on observations made by Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding on his recent visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mr. Goulding's mission was to examine the feasibility of dispatching a United Nations peace-keeping operation in that region.

The Secretary-General said in his report that the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina was "tragic, dangerous, violent and confused" and that "any successful peace-keeping operation" had to be based on "some agreement between the hostile parties". He pointed out that the establishment of UNPROFOR's headquarters in Sarajevo had "not prevented a savage conflict from breaking out there", and noted that these were "not the conditions which permit a United Nations peace-keeping operation to make an effective contribution".

With regard to a request made by Bosnia-Herzegovina's President Izetbegovic for the United Nations to deploy an "intervention force which would be sent in, without the consent of all parties, to enforce an end to the fighting", the Secretary-General stated that "such a concept would require

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many tens of thousands of troops equipped for potential combat with heavily armed and determined adversaries". He said he did not believe that such an enforcement action was "a practicable proposition". As for the protection of humanitarian programmes, the Secretary-General said he could not recommend that the Security Council pursue a United Nations role in providing armed escorts of convoys of relief supplies.

If an agreement was reached by the parties to end hostilities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it might "in this case turn out to be more appropriate for the European Community, rather than the United Nations, to undertake the peace-keeping as well as the peace-making" efforts in that region, the Secretary-General said.

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While in Washington D.C. today, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali delivered a speech at the ninth annual David M. Abshire lecture, hosted by the Centre for Strategic Studies and International Studies, on the subject of United Nations peace-keeping and peace-making.

The Secretary-General stressed the increased demand for United Nations peace-keeping forces, indicating that since 1988, 13 such operations had been set up. This increase in demand for United Nations role in peace-keeping, he said, presented many new questions for the Organization, such as financing. In 1987, for instance, the Member States of the United Nations were asked to pay $233 million for peace-keeping, while, for the next 12 months, the bill for such operations would amount to approximately $2.7 billion, the Secretary-General said.

Pointing to the regional organizations, the Secretary-General stressed that the United Nations "must share the work with others" and that an effort should be made to "decentralize" the responsibilities for peace-keeping. The problem at present, he said, was that the regional organizations had almost no experience and lacked the necessary structures; furthermore, most of them were in an even worse financial condition than the United Nations.

As for the United Nations resource problem, Mr. Boutros-Ghali proposed the creation of a revolving capital fund to insure the future potential of the Organization's peace-keeping operations, as well as an immediate payment plan for member States. He said there was often a gap between the Security Council's decision to set up a new operation and its deployment in the field which could "jeopardize" the success of the operation.

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The Secretary-General met yesterday with the United States President George Bush at the White House in Washington D.C. Following the private consultations, President Bush informed the Secretary-General that he had decided to attend the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro next month.

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According to a press release issued at Headquarters yesterday, President Bush expressed to the Secretary-General his full support for the peace-making and peace-keeping activities of the United Nations and assured him that he would work with Congress so that the United States would meet its financial contributions regarding the United Nations. Among other topics disussed during the meeting yesterday were the importance of the United Nations role in economic, social and humanitarian issues, and the situation in Yugoslavia.

The Secretary-General visited this morning the United Nations Information Center in Washington. He was to return to New York this evening.

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The voter registration for United Nations-supervised free and fair elections in Angola, scheduled for September, will take place from 20 May through 31 July, a United Nations spokeswoman said today.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, Margaret Anstee, had been informed of the registration dates by the National Electoral Council which was established on 9 May. The elections in Angola will take place on 29 and 30 September this year.

The spokeswoman said that 30 of the initial observers envisaged for the registration phase had arrived in Angola and were being deployed to the 18 provincial capitals. There were 350 Military observers, in addition to 90 United Nations police observers positioned in 67 locations throughout the country, as stipulated in the peace Accord signed in Portugal on 31 May last year. Ms. Anstee had been holding regular meetings with Angolan political leaders and representatives of other legally constituted parties about the electoral process.

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Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has been appointed Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Director of the Bureau for Africa. In that capacity, she will lead UNDP activities to assist Governments in Africa, the region with the largest number of least developed countries. She will also plan for, and promote the social and economic well-being of Africans. A Liberian national, Ms. Johnson Sirleaf is the first woman to head a UNDP Regional Bureau.

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